

The following are milestones in Washington State public transportation for the entire year of 2005 and the months in 2006 preceding publication.

MCTA Goes In-House

January 2005

Mason County Transportation Authority (MCTA) was on the move to transfer, consolidate, and improve the efficiency of their operations after 12 years of contracting out all services. MCTA moved all operations “in-house” that resulted in the renovation of the facility that will house all operations, administration, and maintenance services, significantly increasing their operational expenses. The change allowed MCTA to have more flexibility with their vehicles and increase communication between branches of the agency.



BFT Opens New Three Rivers Transit Center

February 2005

Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) completed their goal of a customer service center, transit center, and central office location, with the opening of their new Three Rivers Transit Center. This transit center was a year in development and continues to further BFT’s mission of connecting community and providing quality service to their customers. Aiding the completion of this large capital project were federal and state grants that eased the financial situation of BFT. This also allowed for benefits to be passed onto BFT’s customers through no fare increases and stable, reliable bus routes. Three Rivers Transit Center boasts a conference room where the BFT’s board has held community meetings, and solicited feedback from customers about future transit needs.



Intercity Transit Expands

February 2005

Intercity Transit (IT) continued its plans for expanding service through a series of projects. IT completed its second phase out of three by increasing system wide service hours by 11 percent. IT expanded the vehicle fleet by 13 buses, replaced four buses, and increased the vanpool fleet by 22 vehicles. Furthermore, in July IT acquired additional acreage for central base operations that represents significant progress towards their goals of increasing service. Through the increase in vehicles, real estate, and service hours, Intercity Transit has reclaimed some of its previous service levels not seen since the reduction of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax revenue in 2000.

Community Blazes High Tech Path for Public Transportation

March 2005

Community Transit (CT) set the bar for high tech public transportation with two initiatives that will benefit customers and the environment. First, the introduction of Wi-Fi technology to the buses has allowed customers to use cell phones, laptops, and myriad other electronic communication devices. Second, CT has replaced some of their older buses with the new Invero buses. These buses are more aerodynamically designed, have better fuel economy and advanced exhaust systems, and run on low sulfur diesel, translating to less pollutants being expelled into the air.

Link Transit Improves Performance

March 2005

Taking a hard look at performance measures and striving to work more efficiently, Link Transit improved some of their service statistics. Beginning in March 2005, Link Transit increased their fixed route hours on their trolley service while reducing their more expensive Paratransit route hours. Working in conjunction with this on November 1, was the installation of new Paratransit software and Mobile Data Transmitters in the Paratransit vehicles. The ability to locate the vehicles permitted dispatch to re-route the Paratransit vehicles for optimal route efficiency. Reduction in Paratransit costs also stemmed from the addition of new low-floor buses on fixed routes running at higher frequencies that give persons with disabilities and elderly more options.



Major Changes at C-Tran

May 2005

C-Tran completed some major changes by decreasing service boundaries from all of Clark County to the cities of Vancouver, Camas, Washougal, Battleground, La Conner, Ridgefield, and the Town of Yacolt. Included in this new rezoning of public transit service is the Vancouver Urban Growth Area that still serves major employment centers, such as: Kaiser Permanente, Legacy Hospital, WSU Vancouver, and the Vancouver Clinic. Another significant change within C-Tran concerns the financing of services. On September 20, 2005, the voters of the district overwhelmingly approved a 0.2 percent sales tax increase. The combination of the increased sales tax revenue, increased fares, and the new boundary changes will result in a transit system that benefits the Greater Vancouver area.

High Marks for CUBS

July 2005

The Community Urban Bus Service (CUBS) received some good news after federal, independent, and internal evaluations of their system. The Federal Transportation Administration completed a triennial review of CUBS with a “no finding” statement. The FTA reviews federal grants recipients to ensure that the transit agencies are complying with guidelines of the grant. A review of “no finding” indicates that a particular transit agency has complied with all requirements of the grant. In addition to the federal review, CUBS was evaluated for their operations procedures by LSC Transportation Consultants (started, summer 2005 – completed, February 2006) and determined that CUBS was operating efficiently and using funds appropriately. Topping off a good year, CUBS had no reportable accidents in 2005.

Light Rail Construction Kicks Into High Gear

July 2005

Sound Transit’s Central Link light rail construction from downtown Seattle to Sea-Tac International Airport kicked into high gear in July 2005 with the delivery of a massive tunnel boring machine underground and towering aerial supports rising above SR 518 in Tukwila. With construction underway on all but one contract for the 15.6 mile light rail line in 2005, Link light rail began quickly changing Seattle’s landscape. Drivers on SR 518 began witnessing an engineering marvel as a 500-ton truss machine lifts and places pre-cast segments of the light rail track bed atop 200 piers along the alignment. By July 2006, the elevated rail segment reached I-5 from the southern station at 154th Street and International Boulevard in Tukwila. Light rail from downtown Seattle to Sea-Tac International Airport will be running by 2009 and is expected to carry up to 45,000 people a day by 2020.



Whatcom Transportation Authority Adds New Routes August 2005

In response to community feedback, Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) simplified and expanded its service with a new series of bus routes termed “GO Lines.” These new color coded routes run with higher frequency at every 15 minutes, and simplify their numbering system to coincide with the color of the bus line. This format was initially rolled out in August of 2005, and has expanded to include the fourth addition, the Red Line. The easy to remember numbering, and visually impressive color schemes demonstrated WTA’s merging of the public’s interest in easy to access routes with effective public transportation.



Intermodal Services Benefit Northwest Puget Sound September 2005

Inter-county service between Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties began in September 2005. Transit services between these areas have historically been sparse, and difficult for people to move smoothly from county to county. These new intermodal connections have made transportation easier without long layover times waiting for connecting buses. For example, it is now possible to travel from Anacortes to Seattle on public transportation rather than using more costly private transportation. This cooperation between transit agencies has opened up travel options for customers seeking to travel outside individual transit boundaries. The County Connector was made possible by a two-year, \$2 million grant from WSDOT with funds appropriated by the Washington State Legislature.

Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel Closure September 2005

A major transit center in King County, the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT), was closed in September to proceed with the construction that will accommodate light rail and buses for the future Link light rail from Seattle to Sea-Tac. Complaints from customers were minimized due to the outreach campaign informing the public about the closure and re-routing of buses. In conjunction with the DSTT closure, Seattle’s waterfront street car traveled its last route on November 19, in preparation for Seattle Art Museum’s Waterfront Sculpture Park. Bus routes along the waterfront were re-established to provide similar service, although without the nostalgia. The waterfront street car will be stored until construction of the sculpture park and new KC Metro maintenance facility are completed.

Free Wi-Fi on Select Sound Transit Buses and Trains *October 2005*

Sound Transit (ST) launched a pilot program offering free wireless internet connectivity on select bus and train routes in October 2005. The pilot program gives commuters on ST Express route 545 between Redmond-Seattle and those on the Everett-Seattle Sounder trains access to the internet for free through their personal computers. The pilot program offers yet another way to make the commute more productive, and is scheduled to end in December of 2006.



Columbia County Public Transportation *November 2005*

Columbia County Public Transportation (CCPT) became the state's 28th transit agency and in November passed a 0.4 percent sales tax initiative, in order to secure local funding for public transportation. The passage of a sales tax allows the transit agency to provide greater funding for public transportation by not relying solely on grants. In addition, sales tax is a fairly stable funding source that can provide CCPT the spending power to expand services within Columbia County.



Everett Transit Improves Service

December 2005

Focusing on ride quality and accessibility, Everett Transit modified some of their routes last year in response to feedback through: customer surveys, community outreach, and other partner agency changes. Building on these goals, Everett Transit finished construction of a Customer Service Center and Station located at Everett Mall. Another construction project got underway with the designing of the Everett College Station.

Pullman Transit Offers Off-Hours Routes

December 2005

Pullman Transit has worked to provide additional service to students and community members while school is in session and during breaks. Concurrently with this, Pullman Transit made permanent in 2005 two trial routes on Friday and Saturday evening that will run until 3:00 a.m. the following morning, providing a great service to riders with off hour work schedules. Extended service hours have increased safety and convenience of customers seeking to travel during the early morning hours. To accommodate the general public or students that live in Pullman year round, Pullman Transit expanded their fixed route service by adding holiday service and three new routes during WSU breaks.



Public Transit Agencies Coordinate With Tribes

February 2006

Tribal transportation needs were further enhanced with the distribution of grants in the 2003-2005 biennium. This last year saw the increase in collaborative service between many different Tribes and surrounding communities. The Mason County Transportation Authority demonstrated this coordination in their assistance to Squaxin Transit by leasing a bus, driver training, maintenance services, and administration and dispatching, to the Tribe. These services, valued at \$53,900, help Squaxin Transit provide service to Grays Harbor County via highway 108 from the Tribal Center at Kamilche. Clallam Transit System partners with Makah Public Transit to provide services off the reservation such as Forks and Port Angeles. These services offer tribal members a way to connect with other communities within Clallam County. Other intermodal connections link public transit agencies in Jefferson, Mason, and Grays Harbor Counties on the Olympic Peninsula, making it possible to travel the entire Highway 101 loop using public transportation.

Grants Program Advisory Committee

March 2006

Beginning in March 2006, Public Transportation's Grants Program Advisory Committee (GPAC) started holding meetings regarding a variety of topics related to grants in public transportation. GPAC is comprised of a steering committee with members representing diverse interests in public transportation, human services, tribal, and special needs transportation, from all over Washington. The goal of GPAC is provide advice on policy and investment issues related to grants in public transportation to the legislature. GPAC holds monthly meetings to discuss ways to improve the grants process. For example, making sure that the allotment of grants based on formulas is equitable according to characteristics of the organizations applying. Many different types of groups apply for the grants every year ranging from small non-profit organizations to large transit agencies in Washington State, including intermediate-sized tribal nations and rural transit agencies.

Clallam Transit System Helps Environment

April 2006

Beginning in April, Clallam Transit System made the switch to using B20 Biodiesel blends in its entire vehicle fleet. CTS recognized the need to play their role in reducing the dependency on oil while still offering the same reliable public services it had previously. Biodiesel also represents a cleaner, more environmentally friendly alternative than traditional diesel by producing less sulfates and less particulate matter; equating to less pollutants being put into the atmosphere. CTS joins many other transit agencies that have already committed to the use of alternative fuels.



International Bus Roadeo

May 2006

Every year at the International Bus Roadeo bus operators and maintenance workers from public transportation agencies across the nation and Canada, compete against each other in a series of events designed to test their abilities and demonstrate their skills. The categories represent different length coaches, and another category for maintenance. This year, the 2006 International Bus Roadeo awarded coach operator Matt Chomjak of Community Transit 1st place for his operating skills in the 40-foot coach category. Many other Washington State transit agencies also participated in several different categories and performed well. Congratulations to all of the people in the Washington transit agencies that participated and demonstrated what public transportation in Washington State has to offer.

King Street Station Celebrates a Century *June 2006*

Originally built as a hub for the Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroads in 1906, King Street Station has served the Seattle metropolitan area as a method of transportation of goods, services, and the public for 100 years. King Street Station helped establish Seattle as a major port and trading center for the Northwest at the turn of the century and continues to be a vital transportation center. An additional Amtrak Cascades round trip between Seattle and Portland began on July 1, bringing the total number of trains at the station to 14 Amtrak intercity trains and 12 Sounder commuter trains. The Station also serves as a growing multi modal center for connecting buses and future light rail services.



Summary Report for Community Transportation Providers *July 2006*

WSDOT has published information on transit systems for the past 27 years. However, transit systems are not the only providers of public transportation. Numerous private, nonprofit, tribal, and other government agencies provide crucial transportation services throughout the state. Later this year WSDOT will begin publishing annual information on a selection of these community transportation providers. This report will also include information on the agencies which broker transportation for Medicaid clients. A summary of this information will appear in the *Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) 2005-2006 Report to the Washington State Legislature*. When data collection is complete, WSDOT will publish the full report online as a companion to the *Washington State Summary of Public Transportation*.